Running Head: Comfort Level of a Regular Educator

COMFORT LEVELS OF REGULAR EDUCATOR'S WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES: An Illustration of Training Needs

by

Brenda Swoboda

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The Graduate College
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

ABSTRACT

Swoboda (Writer) (Last Name) | Brenda (First) | K. (Initial)

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The purpose of this study was to identify the professional development needs of the North Crawford teaching staff in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin, through a needs assessment survey of the 41 regular education teachers within the district. The survey inquires about each teacher's comfort level with fifteen various issues surrounding special education. The focus of the questions was on teachers' understanding of the most recent legislation, their knowledge and comfort levels of disability categories, and their overall comfort level in regard to delivering services to students with special needs included in their classrooms. Results of the survey were tabulated to include percentages and frequencies. The results

were to be used as a catalyst for providing in-service training in the areas of the identified lowest levels of comfort and to adopt a user-friendly special education handbook for the regular education staff. It was concluded that the five lowest areas of teacher comfort are: (1) knowledge that regular education teachers have of the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as it applies to their jobs, (2) understanding of the special education referral process, (3) understanding the responsibility of regular education classroom teachers in developing IEP objectives, (4) understanding what a cognitive disability is, and (5) providing a modified grade in accordance with the IEP. The recommendations that were made as a result of the study were to focus an in-service, with regular educator's input, around these low levels of comfort and to develop a handbook for regular education staff that focuses on special education. It was also recommended that we, as special educators, provide more opportunities for staff members to earn credits in the field of special education by increasing awareness of the training opportunities available.

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CHAPTER 1

COMFORT LEVELS OF REGULAR EDUCATOR'S WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: AN ILLUSTRATION OF TRAINING NEEDS

June 4, 1997, was just another day. People worldwide were celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, children and teachers were saying good-bye for one more long-awaited summer, employees stopped at the local truck stop for their first cup of java before facing the challenges of the new workday, and mothers dropped off their children for swimming lessons. To others, June 4, 1997, was a monumental day. It was a day of great accomplishment, pride, and success. It was the day the new amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were signed by President Bill Clinton, furthering the improvement of delivery of educational services to persons with disabilities. Although this is exciting, updated laws, new terminology, increased involvement of parents and regular education teachers, new allocations of monies, and new forms can be quite intimidating. With the need for a more acute understanding of this new legislation, this study is proposing that the needs of the regular education teachers are changing and need to be assessed and addressed to improve their comfort levels when with working with students with disabilities. In order to gain a better understanding of the latest IDEA changes and how IDEA has developed over

time, this paper includes some discussion pertaining to the evolvement of special education. Also discussed is the population of students with disabilities being served in the public school system, and how these students qualify for services. This discussion is followed by a brief overview of the newest legislation and an argument for why regular educators need a better understanding of IDEA. Finally, this paper provides a description of the classroom and students with cognitive disabilities receiving special education services at North Crawford Schools, a rural district in southwestern Wisconsin with a student population of 695 in grades pre-K through 12.

Who is being served?

Persons with disabilities have existed for centuries and ways of approaching each individual person with disabilities have varied over the years. Disability, although not a utilized term during this era, has been proven to exist since the height of classical Greece in 400 B.C, when infanticide was widely practiced. It wasn't until 1578 that the actual delivery of services emerged, when Pedro Ponce de Leon attempted the education of the "handicapped person" in Spain (Winzer, 1993). Over the last hundreds of years, education of persons with disabilities and the surrounding legislation has grown tremendously, but the term special education and the context of delivering services has rapidly developed in the 20th century (Friend & Bursuck, 1999). One of the most important pieces of legislation involving students with disabilities came in 1970 with the passage of

the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA). EHA promised that *all* persons that required educational services would have them delivered to them with a free and appropriate education. In order for states to receive federal funding, schools were told to comply with the minimum requirements outlined in the EHA. In 1975, EHA was amended and named the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA). This legislation set in place a great number of the important legal protections that are now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Data Research, 1997). IDEA was passed in 1990 and assured that all children with disabilities would be provided a free appropriate public education that would meet each individual student's specific needs. It was also enacted to protect the rights of students and their parents. According to the Policy and Procedures Manual from CESA #3 (1990) under the Legal Collection, a federal statute defines the Education of Individuals with Disabilities. It says that the term "children with disabilities" includes children with "mental retardation, hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairments, visual impairments including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities" (p.3). Disabilities, or dual disabilities, such as these are examples of what regular education teachers will encounter more frequently in their classrooms due to the changes in legislation.

Definitions of the three main disabilities that are focus of this research are discussed below. According to Public Law 94-142 found in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: Theory and Practice by Margaret Coleman (1996) an emotional disturbance is defined as:

> …(i) a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance: (a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
>
> (ii) The term includes children who are schizophrenic. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed (p.25).

The term mental retardation is still widely used throughout the United States, but Wisconsin has adopted the term Cognitive Disability. The most widely used definition of mental retardation is one developed by the American Association on Mental Deficiency (AAMD) and reads as follows:

"mental retardation refers to significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior, and manifested during the developmental period" (Sattler, 1992, p.647).

An article written by Donita O'Donnell (1999) identifies the current definition of learning disabilities according to the IDEA law. It states that:

> …specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environment, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (p. 6)

How are they being served?

Students that have been identified to have a disability are legally eligible to have their needs met within the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE states that a student has a right to be educated in the setting that is most like the educational setting of their non-disabled peers. These students with disabilities should also have the appropriate support needed in order to be successful (Friend

& Bursuck, 1999). Often times this setting includes the regular classroom for part of the day. For example, a 5th grade student with a cognitive disability, Wisconsin's term for mental retardation, may be placed with his/her same aged peers in the regular classroom for 50% of the day and only receive special education services for reading/language and math. He or she may work with a paraprofessional within the regular education setting for classes such as social studies and science since this student can be successful in these subjects with the appropriate support and modifications. Each student is individual in his or her needs and each district is responsible for developing a program that best meets the needs of *each* student.

The universal special education term for developing such a program for each student is called an individualized education program (IEP). The IEP is conducted at least annually and is a team effort that is attended by all special education professionals involved with the student's daily instruction, at least one regular educator, the parents, the principal or other designated school representative, and any other professional(s) that may provide services to this student. The special education teacher is responsible for ensuring that the IEP implemented. The IEP is a team effort to develop the most appropriate placement of the student throughout the school day. With the emergence of the 1997 IDEA amendments, a regular education teacher is legally responsible to be in attendance.

Another integral aspect of delivering services that produce the most success for a particular student is the awareness of all other professionals that may be involved. Often, students with disabilities may see a variety of professionals throughout their day. It's important that these people are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities in order to provide the most effective programming. Some of these people will include school psychologists, counselors, speech and language therapists, social workers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, adaptive physical education teachers, nurses, administrators, paraprofessionals, or consultants for needs such as sign language interpreters or bilingual instructors (Friend & Bursuck, 1999).

How many are served?

Within the last twenty years, the number students with disabilities being served within the public school population has greatly increased. In 1997, 12.4% of students in the public school system were students with disabilities (Wolf, 1999). According to Chapter 1 in Images of Mainstreaming, the regular education teacher will have two to four students with disabilities in his or her class and an additional two to four children that may have learning and behavioral difficulties that haven't been identified yet (McNergney, Hallahan and Herbert, 1999). According to the 1998-1999 statistics from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), there are 6,111,180 students with disabilities in public schools nationally, and 116, 320 students with disabilities in Wisconsin (Department of Public

Instruction, Personal Communication, March 28, 2000). As the numbers continue to grow and legislation continues to expand, all educators need to be aware of and understand their changing roles and responsibilities within the realm of special education.

Recent legislation and need for regular education training

The most current piece of legislation pertaining to special education came within the reauthorization of the IDEA law on June 4, 1997. Heumann & Hehir (1997) report that, on this day, President Clinton spoke about how this new legislation reaffirmed and strengthened our national commitment to provide "a world-class education for all our children" and that "once and for all that children with disabilities have a right to be in the classroom" (p.1). The new amendments to the law still protect and enhance the civil rights of students and parents but added additional clarifications. Overall, the IDEA amendments have been enacted and manipulated to improve the student's educational opportunities by "protecting their fundamental rights to a free appropriate public education; emphasizing the responsibility of schools, state and federal governments and agencies, institution of higher education, parents and students to improve education opportunities for all students; and requiring greater accountability for results" (p.2). For purposes of this study, there is a focus on the second provision of emphasizing responsibility of schools. This study will focus mostly on regular educator training that is needed to meet the standards of the IDEA legislation. According

to the article, “Believing in Children – A Great IDEA for the Future” written by Judith E. Heumann and Tom Hehir (1997), the process of planning for the education of each student rarely included a general education teacher in the IEP team (1999). Before expecting a teacher to feel comfortable enough to offer help in planning, there needs to be a confidence level in their knowledge and abilities. Today, with more and more involvement of students with special needs in the regular education classroom, this confidence and knowledge are essential in implementing an educational plan that sets a student up for success.

Regular education teachers need to be educated in order to understand the importance of this legislation. Information that was taken from the article, The Regular Education Initiative Teacher: The Research Results and Recommended Practice written by Gary Peltier (1993), states that recent studies have shown that special educators still feel “a genuine concern that regular education still is not ready – in either attitude or instructional capabilities – to adequately meet the needs of the students with special needs” (p.3). The study also states that some teachers have resented and resisted placement of special students in their classrooms due to the need to modify and follow through with the developed IEP. Also, many teachers have faced the implementations of previous and recent laws with little training or knowledge base to effectively deal with students with special needs (1993). In order for teachers to be able to successfully deliver services, there needs to be some comfort level with understanding their role in

special education. According to John Shinsky, Ph.D., educators are expressing concern that they're not receiving training in the area of special education (1996). Knowing this, for the North Crawford School District to be as effective as possible for the students with disabilities, there needs to be some identification of where their comfort and knowledge levels are in regard to special education, and how they can meet the needs of the North Crawford students with disabilities.

North Crawford's Cognitive Disabilities Program

The Cognitive Disabilities program that exists at North Crawford Junior/Senior High, was developed by the researcher in August of 1996. The students with cognitive disabilities had previously been bussed to a neighboring district. The school is centrally located between two smaller villages, Soldiers Grove and Gays Mills, Wisconsin.

The Cognitive Disabilities program consists of eight students in grades 7-12 with a variety of disabilities and needs. Due to the new IDEA legislation, a special education teacher can have students with disabilities be a part of the program if it is deemed the most appropriate placement for the student by the IEP team. Within the program are seven students identified as being cognitively disabled-borderline and one is dually diagnosed with an emotional disability in addition to a cognitive disability.

In October of 1999, the North Crawford School District had a population of 695 students, with 94 of these being identified as having some sort of disability. Fourteen percent of the students at North Crawford had a disability.

The goals of this particular cognitive disabilities program are to enhance the development of independence within the school and community and to deliver instruction in the functional academic areas of math and reading, vocational and independent living and to provide the students with community experiences on a regular basis. Another aspect of the program is to address the adaptive behaviors of each student. Adaptive behaviors include such specifics as written and verbal communication needs, daily living skills, socialization proficiencies and fine and gross motor skills. Students are included on the average of 50% of their day with either assistance in the classroom through the use of a paraprofessional or modifications made by the regular and special education teachers. The high school special education students are employed by the school district in positions in the kitchen, library, playground, custodial department or vending service. Some are involved in a work experience program within the community.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the professional development needs that are related to regular education teachers' understanding and awareness of various special educational areas. The study defined K-12 teachers' understanding of the latest federal legislation surrounding special education, their

knowledge of disability categories and their overall comfort level in regard to delivering services to included students. The disability categories utilized in this survey focused on the cognitive, emotional and learning categories of disability. This study was conducted in order to develop a user-friendly handbook that addressed the areas of need for the regular education teachers and to implement any in-service training to address those needs.

The results were measured on a one-time needs assessment scale. Teachers were asked to rate their understanding/comfort level on a scale of 0-5 with 5 being the most comfortable and 0 having no comfort level.

The subjects used in this research study were the forty-one K-12 teaching staff of the North Crawford School District, which is located in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin. The assessment was given during the 1999-2000 school year.

Teachers were given the survey and asked to rate themselves as honestly and as accurately as they could on questions relating to special education. The survey was distributed via in-school mail and all answers remained anonymous.

Research Questions

Major questions to be answered in this study are:

1. Did the regular education teachers at North Crawford Schools indicate a higher level of comfort in working with students who were cognitively disabled, learning disabled or emotionally disabled? In which area of the three given disabilities, did North Crawford teachers indicate the lowest

level of comfort?

2. What were the top five areas indicated as the lowest levels of comfort with the delivery of services to students with special needs that were identified by the regular education staff at North Crawford School District?

Definition of Terms

1. Regular education teacher - a teacher who has a majority of students in his or her classroom that are students without an identified disability
2. Special education teacher – a teacher who teaches only those students who have been identified to have a disability through some means of legitimate testing
3. Student with a disability – any student that has been identified as having one or more disabilities that qualifies him or her for special education services within the public school system
4. Cognitive Disability – Wisconsin's adopted term for mental retardation that has two separate categories: borderline and severe. A student must have an IQ of 55-70 to qualify for borderline programming and an IQ of 55 and below to qualify for severe programming.
5. Learning Disability – In addition to the IDEA definition, a student must show deficits in one or more of the following areas: basic reading

skills, reading comprehension, written expression, listening comprehension, oral expression, math calculation and math reasoning.

6. Paraprofessional- An additional staff member that is utilized in a special education classroom or within the school setting to assist and support the students with disabilities and teachers with instructional, tutorial, or daily living needs.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Emergence of IDEA

Laws addressing persons with disabilities date back centuries. Winzer (1993) states that the 1950's were the first time that students and parents both saw a change in attitude regarding dealing with disabilities within the school environment. There was a trend towards legislation on improving services for children with disabilities and acknowledging parental support. Schools saw an increase in recognizing the importance of involving the "mentally retarded" within the educational environment and the special education enrollments swelled. Parents pulled together and developed the National Association for Retarded Children and formed a strong legislative lobby. In 1953, the Educational Bill of Rights for the retarded child was passed and each child that was deemed mentally retarded suddenly had a "program of education and training suited to his particular needs" (p. 376).

The United States Supreme Court on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 was another important event which established the precedent that students couldn't be tracked or separated based on race or socioeconomic backgrounds. Tracking was found to be a violation of students' right to an equal educational opportunity (Schmid, Moneypenny & Johnston, 1977).

According to Winzer (1993), the 1960's then brought about a surge of humanism and focus was on the treatment of exceptional persons. In October, 1963, President Kennedy signed Public Law 88-164. This widened services for children with disabilities but also defined a wider scope of disabilities. Those who were looked upon as mentally retarded were no longer the only individuals to receive services. Public Law 88-164 expanded to include, "hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, severely emotionally disturbed, crippled or other health impaired children who by reason there of require special education" (p. 378).

Segregation was still apparent within the school systems, and regular education teachers rarely saw those children with disabilities. The 1970's began to recognize this gap with an emergence of more and more legislation. Acts, new laws and amendments began to surface on a continual basis and mainstreaming became a familiar term. McNergney, Hallahan, and Hebert (1999) point out that in 1975, a trend of working with students with disabilities in the regular education classroom began. This was known as mainstreaming. The 1975 Education of the Handicapped Law (Public Law 94-142) stated that "a free and appropriate public education must be provided for all children with disabilities ages 5 and above. Education must be planned through an individualized education program (IEP) and carried out in the least restrictive environment" (p. 363). Segregation was

giving way to mainstreaming, and suddenly those students with disabilities were a daily part of the regular education environment.

One of the most important and recent pieces of legislation, which was also discussed in Chapter 1, was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law and the amendments that followed started to recognize that autism, traumatic brain injury, and infants and toddlers with disabilities should be considered a part of the special education definition, and needed to include rehabilitation and social work. (McNergney, Hallahan & Hebert, 1999)

As stated earlier in the research, the IDEA amendments of 1997 once again changed the face of special education. Regular education teachers were now mandated to be a part of the IEP team. Although they weren't required to take part in all discussions relating to the particular child with a disability, they became responsible for being part of the discussions about the child's daily involvement with the general curriculum (Office of Special Education Program [OSEP], 1999).

Following the new changes with IDEA, the article IDEA General Overview Question and Answer was provided by OSEP (1997) to assist in understanding the changes. It stated that "teachers will benefit from advancements in research through professional development initiatives" (p. 2). It went on to discuss that children with disabilities would be placed in the regular education classroom more frequently due to a removal of financial incentives in

programming students in special classrooms. One of the most critical segments addressed how the roles of the regular education classroom teacher would change. OSEP states that "the law requires that IEP's include the program modification and supports for the child and teacher to enable the child to succeed in the classroom. The law also provides continued federal support to improve teacher training nationwide and adds support of teacher training programs in geographic areas with acute teacher shortages" (p.3). With these strides for children with disabilities, it became apparent that the special education teacher/staff would no longer be the only ones responsible for the delivery of services. As part of the goals for this study, it is hypothesized that the regular education teachers will need to have a much more expanded comfort level when working with students with a variety of special needs in their regular education classrooms.

Mainstreaming and Inclusion

Two arguments that have been ongoing with special education deal with mainstreaming and inclusion. Although they have the same basic concept of getting the student with a disability into the classroom, they really are two very different concepts.

Minke, Bear, Deemer and Griffin (1996) stated that the number of students with disabilities that will be educated in the regular education classrooms will continue to grow over the next few years. They attributed this increase to two very important reform movements in special education: the Regular

Education Initiative and full inclusion. The population of students with disabilities continues to put a focus on inclusion. In the last five years, inclusion has grown 10% nationwide. Fifty percent of students with disabilities from the ages of 6-11 are in regular classrooms and 30% of students ages 12 + are in the regular classroom (Price, Mayfield, McFadden & Marsh, 1998). For purposes of the research conducted in this study, the focus will include the topics of inclusion and mainstreaming.

According to Monahan and Marino (1996), inclusion is a term that challenges schools to adopt the philosophy that every student can learn. For this case, they are speaking of students who are disabled. Inclusion focuses on integrating students into the education system as a whole in order to meet a full range of needs for students. The authors stipulate that:

> …in establishing programs for persons with special needs to participate in an inclusive setting, it has been suggested that several components should be included such as an atmosphere and culture for change, the provision of an opportunity to articulate a vision of inclusion, the planning and provision of appropriate resources, monitoring and documenting progress, and the provision of ongoing training for the staff and families. (p.1)

They also point out that for inclusion to be successful there must be a commitment on the part of everyone involved, which would include the parents, teachers, administrators and other related service staff.

One of the major criticisms of inclusion is that the regular education teachers are rarely the ones that support this movement, and that they challenge the assumption that all children can be best taught in the regular education classroom. (Minke et al., 1996) In researching this topic, one common theme that was encountered was that the voice of the regular education teacher is rarely heard, and that this is greatly affecting the inclusive environment because of teacher hostility. In the end, the student is the one that is ultimately being hurt. Although there is some agreement with this argument, it is believed by this researcher that if regular education teachers possessed a greater comfort level achieved through training and knowledge, their voices would speak out on behalf of the student with a disability.

Mainstreaming is a term that comes from the emergence of the least restrictive environment (LRE) and was one of the first terms that included children with disabilities in the general education environment. Turnbull (1993) describes it as "a concept that addresses the placement of disabled students into educational settings – classes, other activities, and buildings – with nondisabled students. Both doctrines [LRE and mainstreaming] emphasize the integration of disabled and nondisabled students, and both regard integration as a strategy for educating disabled students" (p. 305).

The philosophy that a school district decides to embrace surrounding inclusion deals with a number of factors. One focus group study conducted by

Paula J. Stanovich (1999) found three general themes as to what a school will embrace regarding inclusion. First, she found that the participants stressed how important it is that you build a sense of community with your learners. The second theme focused on the types of instruction that were being used to foster the learning of every student in an inclusive setting. Finally, she found that the teachers thought it necessary to know and understand those individual students who bring a unique mix of learner characteristics to the classrooms and school as a whole. Stanovich concluded that the "voices of the general education teachers must be added to the conversation about inclusive schooling if this educational reform is to be successful" (p.3).

An additional study done by Hamre-Nietupski, McKee, Cook, Dvorsky, Nietupski and Costanza, (1999) focused on inclusion literature and the elements needed for it to be successful. Through their research, they found that seven major elements need to be apparent in order for inclusion to succeed. They are:

> …(1) a shared vision that all students belong as members of the school community; (2) administrative commitment and support, particularly active support from the school principal, has been cited as an important factor in promoting inclusion; (3) staff preparation and training for persons expected to be involved in the inclusion process is crucial; (4) communication and collaboration time between staff members was one of the most frequently cited important inclusion elements; (5) a structured

> planning process that offers specific guidance for including students promotes successful transition to, and maintenance in, inclusive classrooms; (6) ongoing direct service and consultative resources to be available to personnel in schools; and (7) support of non disabled peers can be a powerful force in fostering inclusion. (pp. 1-2)

Another buzz word heard in the last few years that surfaced throughout the literature has been the concept of full inclusion. McLesky and Waldron (1996) defined full inclusion as a "guiding theme or goal as they develop inclusive school programs. This concept implies that the purpose of inclusion is to include *all* students for *all* of the school day in *every* school setting, preschool through high school" (p.3). A problem arises with that concept because the needs of each individual student may not be being addressed. As a teacher of students with cognitive disabilities, often times according to an IEP or transition goals, the appropriate placement may be at a community work site or engaging in grocery shopping experiences to acquire skills for becoming an independent adult.

Attitudes and Comfort Levels of Regular Education Teachers

Part of the focus of this research is to examine the feelings of the regular educator about various issues surrounding special education. It is a legal fact that students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment and be offered a free and appropriate public education per Public Law 94-142 (McNergney, Hallahan & Hebert, 1999). How this is done is still being debated.

Cook, Semmel and Gerber (1999) state that advocates of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classrooms is "a moral imperative that does not require, and can not wait for empirical justification" (p.1). They've found that inclusion is being implemented with great frequency even though there aren't successful documented outcomes of such practice. One of the challenges presented in their study, Attitudes of Principals and Special Education Teachers Toward the Inclusion of Students with Mild Disabilities: Critical Differences of Opinion, is that caution needs to be taken when dealing with inclusion, in part due to the lack of support among those implementing it. They felt that a critical part of how inclusion is received is largely due to positive attitudes of key personnel. They found that only 40.5 % of regular education teachers agree with the concept of inclusion. Part of this discomfort stems from regular education teachers' lack of adequate material support, time, and personnel support for successful implementation of inclusion.

Although Cook, Semmel & Gerber stated that inclusion is a movement that warrants no need for documentation of its success because of its moral rightness, success can be documented. Research by Stainback & Stainback (as cited by Price, Mayfield, McFadden and Marsh, 1998) reported some very obvious successes. They report that:

> …(1) change evokes fear among some classroom teachers and classmates, which generally subside with experience; (2) most difficulties are related

> to behavior problems; (3) included students showed gains in learning; (4) included students had positive influences on their classmates; (5) the mainstream curriculum requires adaptation; (6) collaboration and support are integral to inclusion; and (7) social interactions varied among students, some positive and some negative. (p.23)

An additional study done by Woley, Werts, Cladwell, Snyder and Lisowski (as cited by Barnes, 1999) found that the regular education teachers perceived that they weren't prepared for inclusion. Eighty percent of the surveyed teachers felt that they needed training in inclusion practices. Only 20% felt that they had all of the necessary training that they needed.

Minke, Bear, Deener and Griffin (1996), in their study, acknowledged that there is a lack of support revolving around integration of students with disabilities in classrooms but go on to focus a great deal on *why* regular education teachers display so much resistance to including children with special needs in their classroom. One of the most common reasons cited was that most teachers generally perceived that they lacked of skills needed when teaching students with disabilities. Much of this is due to teachers' perception that different teaching methods are needed when teaching students with disabilities. Also, regular education teachers may or may not see that modifications or adaptations are a feasible practice in the regular classroom. This outlook was witnessed more at the middle and high school levels. The authors state that "resistance should be

expected unless regular education teachers are provided sufficient "protected resources". As defined by Kauffman (1988), protected resources are those instructional resources that are tagged explicitly to serve low-achieving students; that is, they cannot be allocated by the teacher to other students. Without such protected resources, teacher resistance is likely to continue" (p.154-155).

One problem that this researcher sees with not allowing regular education students access to these "protected resources" is that it goes against the philosophy that all students should have the same access to materials and should benefit from inclusion. The solution could come in a wide array of forms such as an increase in teacher training in colleges, the option of paid training for staff members, collaborative teaching or job sharing.

As for addressing teacher training as a means to an end, increasing the number of special education credits needed or requiring the credits to be completed before entering student teaching may ease some of the perceived discomfort. For example, after an interview with a senior student within the education program at a local college, it was found that she will enter student teaching without *any* credits addressing the special education field. The only class that she is required to take can only be fit into her schedule after she returns from student teaching to finish up loose credits (Jennifer Hanson, Personal Communication, March 29, 2000).

Price, Mayfield, McFadden and Marsh (1998) address collaborative teaching in their book, Collaborative Teaching: Special Education for Inclusive Teaching. They stress that in-service training is essential, and that teachers must be prepared at the pre-service and in-service levels to better equip themselves to deal with the challenges of inclusion. This training is seen as a way to lessen resistance to inclusion and needs to encompass student assessment, classroom resource management, curriculum design and implementation, integration opportunities, social problem solving curriculum, behavior management, working with parents, and managing education support staff. Successful inclusive practice is then theorized to attack the attitudinal barriers that still exist in education today.

Monahan and Marino (1996) concluded that when examining teacher training programs, we need to notice and encourage the merger of special education and regular education. These programs need to demonstrate the inclusion of information about all children across the curriculum and not rely on one special education course to address the entire scope of information that is needed for our future teachers. They suggest that clinical experiences for prospective teachers include working with students with full ranges of abilities in programs that model and promote team teaching and cooperative learning, as well as offering opportunities to provide planning, implementation and evaluation opportunities.

In addition, Peltier (1993) notes that teachers with advanced training felt more competent when dealing with students with disabilities. The study stated that teachers who have Master's Degrees form a broader knowledge base and, in turn, have a better adjustment to working with the "handicapped child".

With these statistics and comforts in mind, the question arises of how do we move to a more collaborative approach where *everyone* is comfortable with the practice? One answer formed through a study done by Rebecca Snyder (1999) states that the inclusion movement has been primarily a special education movement. One of the most affected groups by the inclusion movement is the regular education teachers, and they haven't been involved in the inclusion movement. For inclusion to be effective and successful for all students, Snyder states that "general education professionals, administrators, and parents of students with special needs all need to be involved in the conceptualization and implementation of inclusion". This special education movement is like a "wedding in which we, as special education teachers, have forgotten to invite the bride (regular educators)" (p.1).

How are schools moving towards collaboration?

Price, Mayfield, McFadden and March (1998) have discussed some possible options in getting regular and special education teachers on the same page. They pointed out that conflict and disagreement about inclusion will most certainly be a part of educational dialogue for awhile. Schools districts, along

with teacher programs, must deal with these frustrations because the trend is showing more inclusion now than ever before. Therefore, changes will be expected on the part of the regular education teacher, and there needs to be some concentration on and devotion to preparing these teachers and administrators for the instructional practices that enhance learning of those students with disabilities. The authors also point out that for some time there has been a blurred vision of what each teacher's role is when it comes to working with students with disabilities. They feel that the secondary special education teacher becomes a part-time tutor, and they feel that this could be mended by defining a clear direction for special education in school beyond the elementary grades, when inclusion takes on a new form.

In conclusion, it can be successfully stated that there isn't one right solution to improving attitudes and comfort levels of regular education teachers when working with students with disabilities. Some of the key terms that were obvious throughout the readings were collaboration, training, role clarification and cohesion within schools. With these topics as an underlying goal, comfort levels and attitudes can be successfully addressed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used to conduct the assessment of comfort levels with special education issues of the regular education staff at North Crawford School District. It includes a description of the subjects studied, the data gathering instrument, procedures used for data gathering and analysis, and any unknowns or limitations with the study.

Description of Subjects

The subjects that were used in this study were the forty-one K-12 regular education teachers currently teaching within the North Crawford School District in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin. For the purpose of this study, regular education was defined as any teacher who taught a majority of students who were not receiving any special education services. The subjects were selected by cluster sampling and consisted of an already intact group of teachers who were asked to voluntarily fill out a researcher-developed questionnaire.

Instrument

The instrument that was utilized in this study was developed by the researcher in the summer of 1999. It was titled Regular Educator's Comfort with Special Education. The purpose of the study was to determine, with a needs assessment scale, the regular educator's comfort level with special education. The study asked some basic demographic information regarding age, sex, grade

taught, number of special education credits earned and number of years of teaching experience. The study served as a catalyst in producing information to be used to develop a handbook that dealt with the areas of special education with which regular educators felt uncomfortable or areas where their uncertainty lingered. The study also provided information that assisted in developing an all-school in-service, where credit hours could possibly be earned.

The content of the instrument dealt with questions regarding teachers' comfort levels with the new IDEA legislation, their understanding of a variety of special education terms, their knowledge of the differences within disabilities, their thoughts on mainstreaming and inclusion, and their overall comfort level with working with students with special needs. Refer to Appendixes A and B for copies of the cover letter and questionnaire used in this study.

The subjects rated their responses in accordance with a Likert scale. They were able to choose an answer on a scale of 0-5, with 0 representing no comfort level at all and 5 representing a very strong comfort level.

The developed instrument was a content valid instrument due to the research completed on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the input of various professionals in the field. The instrument also has validity since the questions were developed in accordance with the research used and some questions were adapted from an already developed survey that was completed in 1996. The study, Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion: Implications for Teacher

Education in Schools 2000, was used as a resource for questions (Monahan & Marion, 1996).

The questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of regular educators that taught at a neighboring school district. Along with the regular educators, five members of the North Crawford administration and other professional staff critiqued the instrument. All responses were anonymous.

Procedures

The anonymous questionnaire was distributed via in-school mail on February 7, 2000, to the subjects. The following Monday, February 14, 2000, an additional questionnaire was redistributed to increase the number of respondents. Teachers were provided with a summary of the results. The handbook will be developed in accordance with areas where low levels of comfort were identified. In addition, in-services on special education will be planned following the results of the study.

Scale of measurement

The questionnaire measured two main components. The first component was the demographic information that asked for the grade levels of students taught by the teacher, numbers of years the teacher had been in teaching, and the number of special education credits that they teacher had earned. These variables were multiple choice and calculated by numbers and percents. The second component of the questionnaire entailed twelve questions that focused on comfort

levels of regular education teachers when it comes to working within special education. The subjects were given the opportunity to utilize a Likert scale with zero meaning they had no comfort level and five meaning they had a very strong comfort level. These variables were measured with a numerical score. A mean was calculated along with a percentage score per each item on the Likert scale.

Unknowns

The rate of response to the questionnaire may have affected the results since a portion of the teachers aren't represented although the results do cover of majority of the teachers at North Crawford School District. Teachers may have chosen not to respond to the questionnaire or not to respond honestly, since some of the questions related to their professional performance. If a majority of teachers responded in a dishonest manner or weren't clear on the topic, the percentile needs would be affected and there would not be an accurate understanding of where these needs lie.

Limitations

Limitations to the study remain with the honesty of respondents. The instrument also only measured their comfort levels within the specific areas addressed and did not measure their willingness to participate in any professional development activities. The sample size also proved to have limitations, since the missing responses of the regular educators who did not complete the instrument, 37%, could have significantly changed the comfort levels.

The results of this study were applied to the North Crawford teaching staff. The findings will be useful in developing a program that enhances special education in the area of regular educator comfort level with special education. The handbook will be a beneficial resource for all teachers, especially for new teachers to the district.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to address the comfort levels of regular education teachers as they relate to issues within special education at the North Crawford School District. The results were provided to the staff and will be used in developing a special education handbook for the regular education teachers and in-service training to address the lowest identified areas of comfort.

Data Analysis

Rate of Response

Forty-one questionnaires were distributed on February 7, 2000 to the regular education teachers at North Crawford School. Twenty-six of these surveys were returned, giving the evaluator a 63% return rate.

The survey asked the subjects to rate their level of comfort with fifteen questions, each of which addressed an issue within special education. In the following tables, you will find the valid percent for each comfort level identified and the number of people that responded (n).

Statement 1: My comfort level in regards to my knowledge of the 1997 IDEA amendments as they apply to my job is…

With the recent changes in the IDEA legislation, the role of the regular education teacher is continuing to develop and change their responsibilities as an IEP team member. Seventy-seven percent of the staff at North Crawford felt little or no comfort when it comes to understanding the latest changes within the IDEA legislation. Table one shows the overall responses to comfort levels held by the regular education teachers at North Crawford.

Table 1

Statement 1: Knowledge of 1997 IDEA Amendments

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	30.8%	8
1 Little comfort level	26.9%	7
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	19.2%	5
3 Average comfort level	15.4%	4
4 Strong comfort level	3.8%	1
5 Very strong comfort level	3.8%	1

Statement 2: My comfort level in regards to understanding of the special education referral process is…

The process of referring students for an evaluation is often confusing and lengthy since there are many interventions, consents and testing, and the IEP team meeting needing to take place before a final decision is made. Again, this requires a great team effort, and since the regular education teacher spends the most time with new and/or incoming students, he or she is a key part of the referral process. Over 50% of the staff felt less than an average comfort level when it comes to referring students to the appropriate staff member and/or understanding the process of getting to the referral point.

Table 2

Statement 2: Understanding Special Education Referral Process

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	22.2%	6
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	25.9%	7
3 Average comfort level	25.9%	7
4 Strong comfort level	18.5%	5
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 3: My comfort level in regards to my knowledge of special education terminology (ie: IEP, CD, LD) is…

Acronyms are everywhere in special education and can be very intimidating but it's a key part in understanding meetings, memos, legislation information and each student's IEP. Table 3 represents the comfort levels of the staff at North Crawford as they relate to understanding abbreviations. Fifty-five percent of the staff have somewhat of a comfort level or an average comfort level when it comes to understanding the special education terminology that they come into contact with.

Table 3

Statement 3: Knowledge of Special Education Terminology

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	7.4%	2
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	22.2%	6
3 Average comfort level	33.3%	9
4 Strong comfort level	14.8%	4
5 Very strong comfort level	22.2%	6

Statement 4: My comfort level in regards to possessing an accurate understanding of what a learning disability is….

Throughout the North Crawford School District, almost every teacher will at some time either have a student included or mainstreamed into his or her classroom, and the teacher will need to have knowledge of each particular disability. Each disability has very specific differences that aren't always apparent to an untrained educator. Being able to deliver services in the best way possible to each individual student requires an understanding of the differences and an ability to accommodate each difference. A majority of the staff, 67%, have an average comfort level or above.

Table 4

Statement 4: Understanding a Learning Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	3.7%	1
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	29.6%	8
3 Average comfort level	14.8%	4
4 Strong comfort level	44.4%	12
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 5: My comfort level in regards to possessing an accurate understanding of what a cognitive disability is….

Students who have cognitive disabilities are being mainstreamed now more than ever. Sixty percent of the staff rated that they have an average comfort level or above. Table 5 represents the varying stages of comfort when it comes to understanding what a cognitive disability is.

Table 5

Statement 5: Understanding a Cognitive Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	11.1%	3
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	29.6%	8
3 Average comfort level	11.1%	3
4 Strong comfort level	40.7%	11
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 6: My comfort level in regards to possessing an accurate understanding of what an emotional disability is…

Understanding what an emotional disability is can be a key factor to that student's success or failure in a classroom. The comfort levels with this disability range from 26% having somewhat of a comfort level to 37% having a strong comfort level. Table six details the ranges of comfort level with understanding emotional disabilities.

Table 6

Statement 6: Understanding an Emotional Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	7.4%	2
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	25.9%	7
3 Average comfort level	22.2%	6
4 Strong comfort level	37.0%	10
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 7: My comfort level in regards to working with students in my classroom who are learning disabled is…

With mainstreaming and inclusion becoming such an apparent part of defining the least restrictive environment, regular education teachers need to possess a comfort level when it comes to working with them in the classroom, usually without any in class supports. Ninety-three percent of the staff felt an average or above comfort level when it comes to working with students with learning disabilities in their classroom.

Table 7

Statement 7: Working with students with a Learning Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	0.0%	0
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	7.4%	2
3 Average comfort level	48.1%	13
4 Strong comfort level	37.0%	10
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 8: My comfort level in regards to working with students in my classroom who are cognitively disabled is…

Again, with advances in special education, students with cognitive disabilities are seen more and more within the regular education environment. At times, these students are placed in class with either teacher or paraprofessional support. Fifty-two percent of the staff at North Crawford reported that they have an average comfort level with working with students with cognitive disabilities in their classrooms.

Table 8

Statement 8: Working with students with a Cognitive Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	7.4%	2
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	11.1%	3
3 Average comfort level	51.9%	14
4 Strong comfort level	22.2%	6
5 Very strong comfort level	7.4%	2

Statement 9: My comfort level in regards to working with students in my classroom who are emotionally disabled is…

Table 9 deals with the comfort levels of regular education teachers as it relates to working with students with emotional disabilities in a classroom. Fifty-two percent of the staff felt an average comfort level when working with students with emotional disabilities in their classrooms.

Table 9

Statement 9: Working with students with an Emotional Disability

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	3.7%	1
1 Little comfort level	7.4%	2
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	22.2%	6
3 Average comfort level	51.9%	14
4 Strong comfort level	11.1%	3
5 Very strong comfort level	3.7%	1

Statement 10: My comfort level in regards to modifying assignments per individual student is…

Depending on the student and how the IEP is written, some students have identified modified assignment requirements and some teachers will independently provide modified assignments as they get to know a student's abilities. Forty-eight percent of the staff reported that they have an average comfort level when modifying assignments for students.

Table 10

Statement 10: Modifying Assignments per Student

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	3.7%	1
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	11.1%	3
3 Average comfort level	48.1%	13
4 Strong comfort level	25.9%	7
5 Very strong comfort level	11.1%	3

Statement 11: My comfort level in regards to attending IEP meetings is…

With the changes in the 1997 IDEA legislation, at least one regular education teacher is now required to be in attendance at IEP meetings. An overwhelming, 89% of the staff at North Crawford are comfortable attending IEP meetings.

Table 11

Statement 11: Attending IEP Meetings

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	0.0%	0
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	11.1%	3
3 Average comfort level	59.3%	16
4 Strong comfort level	11.1%	3
5 Very strong comfort level	18.5%	5

Statement 12: My comfort level in regards to providing suggestions for individual students while in an IEP meeting is…

Again with the changes in the IDEA legislation, teachers are required to be a part of the IEP team where important decisions are made regarding a child's placement, programming and daily routine. Table 12 shows the almost identical results as the previous table where 89% of the regular education teachers are comfortable providing suggestions and having input while attending the IEP meetings.

Table 12

Statement 12: Providing Suggestions in IEP Meetings

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	0.0%	0
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	11.1%	3
3 Average comfort level	51.9%	14
4 Strong comfort level	25.9%	7
5 Very strong comfort level	11.1%	3

Statement 13: My comfort level in regards to understanding my responsibility with developing IEP objectives is…

Although the special education teacher is responsible for the actual written IEP, many members of the IEP team have input into what the IEP states. The IEP team members are all responsible for bringing in their observations and/or testing scores about a particular student and with these outcomes, goals are developed. Table 13 represents the comfort level of the regular education staff with this practice and approximately 50% of the staff at North Crawford have an average or above average comfort level with this.

Table 13

Statement 13: Understanding Responsibility in Developing IEP Objectives

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	18.5%	5
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	3.3%	9
3 Average comfort level	25.9%	7
4 Strong comfort level	11.1%	3
5 Very strong comfort level	11.1%	3

Statement 14: My comfort level in regards to providing a modified grade in accordance with the IEP is…

At times, a modified grading schedule is provided per the student's IEP. Teachers have expressed concerns with this in past revolving around fairness and their willingness to alter a grade. Fifty-nine percent of the staff felt an average comfort level or above with another 26 % having somewhat of a comfort level with providing a modified grade.

Table 14

Statement 14: Providing a Modified Grade with the IEP

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	3.7%	1
1 Little comfort level	1.1%	3
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	25.9%	7
3 Average comfort level	22.2%	6
4 Strong comfort level	22.2%	6
5 Very strong comfort level	14.8%	4

Statement 15: My comfort level in regards to team teaching with a special education teacher is…

As we move towards more inclusion and mainstreaming, the amount of time that the special education teacher to spend in the regular classroom is increasing. 0% of the staff state that they have no comfort level with team teaching and 74% of the staff would be comfortable team teaching and sharing their class with a special education teacher.

Table 15

Statement 15: Team Teaching with Special Education Teachers

Comfort Levels	Valid Percent	n
0 No comfort level	0.0%	0
1 Little comfort level	11.1%	3
2 Somewhat of a comfort level	4.8%	4
3 Average comfort level	22.2%	6
4 Strong comfort level	33.3%	9
5 Very strong comfort level	18.5%	5

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the questionnaire completed by the forty-one regular education teaching staff at North Crawford School District. The data was tabulated to the nearest tenth of a percent. The data from the fifteen questions was taken and recorded in table format. Each question was rated according to 5 comfort levels which are: (0) having no comfort level, (1) having little comfort level, (2) having somewhat of a comfort level, (3) having an average comfort level, (4) having a strong comfort level, and (5) having a very strong comfort level. Conclusions based on the results are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 reviews the purpose of the study, review of literature, procedures utilized to complete the study and results. After reviewing the results, some conclusions are made and recommendations for the North Crawford School District are documented.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the various comfort levels of the regular education teachers as they related to specific issues within the field of special education. These results will be used to provide training to staff and to be the basis for developing a handbook that will assist regular education teachers in understanding special education at North Crawford School District. The literature that was reviewed supported topics within special education that focused on the changes in policy and roles of regular and special educators. It addressed issues surrounding attitudes of regular education teachers and comfort levels with various issues, and it gave an overall examination of the stages that special education has gone through over the years. Chapter 3 discussed the methods used to evaluate the comfort levels of regular education teachers through the use of a questionnaire that was developed by the researcher in the summer of 1999. The results were tabulated and tables were provided in Chapter 4. The results

included demographic information about the staff at North Crawford School District and the mean comfort levels for all 15 areas addressed within the survey.

Conclusions

Demographic Data

In looking at the calculations for the demographic data, it was found that the average length of teaching for the regular education teachers responding to the questionnaire was from 12-17 years, with 35% of the staff falling in this range of teaching experience. When looking at the number of special education credits taken over those years by members of the staff, an alarming 65% of the staff responding reported five or fewer than credits in the special education area.

Research Question 1: Did the regular education teachers at North Crawford Schools indicate a higher level of comfort in working with students who were cognitively disabled, learning disabled or emotionally disabled? In which area of the three given disabilities, did the North Crawford teachers indicate the lowest level of comfort?

Based on the results, the teachers at North Crawford seem to possess at least an average level of comfort when working with the above disabilities. No one of the disabilities stands out more than the other enough to make a significant difference when analyzing comfort levels. When working with students with cognitive disabilities, they possess a 52% average comfort level. For learning disabilities, the staff reported an average comfort level of 48% and for emotional

disabilities they maintain an average comfort level of 52%. Based on these numbers, it can be concluded that the staff at North Crawford School District does not have a higher or lower level of comfort with any one of the three disabilities mentioned in the questionnaire and study. Most staff members have at least an average comfort level with each disability.

Research Question 2: What were the top five areas indicated as the lowest levels of comfort with the delivery of services to students with special needs that were identified by the regular education staff at North Crawford School District?

One of the purposes of this study was to identify the areas where the staff held the lowest levels of comfort and to attack and improve these areas through in-service training. After calculating the lowest three totals of no comfort level, little comfort level, and somewhat of a comfort level on the Likert scale, five areas of lowest comfort levels were identified. These five areas are as follows: (1) "knowledge of the 1997 IDEA amendments as they apply to my job" - 76.9% of the regular education teachers had less than an average comfort level, (2) "understanding the special education referral process" - 48.1% of regular education teachers had less than an average comfort level, (3) "understanding my responsibility with developing IEP objectives" - 51.8% of regular education teachers had less than an average comfort level, (4) "understanding what a cognitive disability is" - 40.7% of the regular education teachers having less than an average comfort level, and (5) "providing a modified grade in accordance with

the IEP" - 40.7% of the regular education teachers having less than an average comfort level. Since these are the areas in which teachers have the least amount of comfort, it can be concluded that the in-service should gear training around these topics.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the conclusion derived from the data from the survey titled Regular Educator's Comfort Level with Special Education.

1. In looking over the lowest areas of comfort within special education, the researcher recommends that some sort of in-service training be offered to the staff that focuses on improving knowledge and/or training within the five lowest areas of comfort.
2. Prior to the in-service training, it is recommended that the district provide an additional survey allowing the regular education teachers an opportunity to present a narrative or suggestions on their perceptions for what the training should entail. This involves them in the planning process.
3. After looking at the low number of special education credits currently held by members of the staff, the researcher recommends that the staff be provided with information for more opportunities to take special education classes for credit. This can be done by improving access to information about the classes that are being offered through local education agencies. Since special

education teachers are usually notified of all special education classes offered, the researcher suggests that they distribute these materials consistently to the regular education staff.

APPENDIX A

Regular Educator's Comfort Level with Special Education

Please circle the most accurate answer for the following questions.

Grade level taught: Credits	# of Years Teaching	# of Primarily Special Education
a) Elementary	a) 0-5	a) 0-5
b) Junior High	b) 6-11	b) 6-11
c) Senior High	c) 12-17	c) 12-17
d) K-12	d) 18-23	d) 18+
e) 7-12	e) 24+	

Please answer the following questions, using the scale below, with the answer that best identifies your comfort level.

0 = No comfort level
1 = Little comfort level
2 = Somewhat of a comfort level
3 = Average comfort level
4 = Strong comfort level
5 = Very strong comfort level

My comfort level in regards to…..

1. my knowledge of the 1997 IDEA amendments as they apply to my job..… 0 1 2 3 4 5
2. understanding of the special education referral process is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
3. my knowledge of special education terminology is (ie: IEP,CD, LD)…. 0 1 2 3 4 5
4. possessing an accurate understanding of what a learning disability is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
5. possessing an accurate understanding of what a cognitive disability is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
6. possessing an accurate understanding of what an emotional disability is…. 0 1 2 3 4 5
7. working with students in my classroom who are learning disabled….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
8. working with students in my classroom who are cognitively disabled….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
9. working with students in my classroom who are emotionally disabled…. 0 1 2 3 4 5
10. modifying assignments per individual students is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
11. attending IEP meetings is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
12. providing suggestions for individual students while in an IEP meeting….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
13. understanding my responsibility with developing IEP objectives….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
14. providing a modified grade in accordance with the IEP….. 0 1 2 3 4 5
15. team teaching with a special education teacher is….. 0 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B

February 7, 2000

Dear North Crawford Teaching Staff,

In accordance with the program requirements for the Master's of Education program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, I am required to complete a Plan B thesis paper. I am asking that you take only a few minutes of your time and assist me with this.

Attached, you will find a questionnaire that addresses various issues within special education and your perception of some of these issues. On June 4, 1997, President Clinton signed amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). I'm sure many of you have heard of this legislation and may be familiar with some of its rules and regulations. It's requiring many changes within special and regular education.

The purpose of this study is to complete a needs assessment survey in order to initiate any necessary professional development in-services and to develop a user-friendly handbook that deals with special education. Due to mainstreaming and inclusion, you are one of the main constants for many of the students with disabilities that attend North Crawford Schools. **Your input is essential to developing an effective program for these students so that they are successful with their education.**

I've chosen this topic because I feel special education will continue to evolve and require more and more involvement of students with special needs within the general education curriculum. I believe that North Crawford is unique in its teacher's willingness to work with students with disabilities and the staff can offer valuable information. Please complete the attached survey and return it to me or place it in my mailbox by **February 11, 2000**. **Your response is anonymous and necessary to my paper**.** A summary of the results will be provided to you.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this survey. Feel free to contact me with any questions or ideas/concerns that you may have with the IDEA legislation. Thank you again!

Sincerely,

Brenda Swoboda
7-12 Cognitive Disabilities Teacher
North Crawford Junior/Senior High

** I understand that by returning the attached questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. Due to the small sample size, there is a **potential** chance that you may be identified as a member of a subgroup (i.e. Math, English) but no individual can be identified. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice. NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

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